

**AMBERLE**

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Eretria slowly turns a rabbit that's roasting on a campfire spit. Her horse is tied to an oak, a tarp covers a wooden sleigh piled with the loot stolen from the cottage.

THE SNAP OF A BRANCH.

It's faint, barely audible, in one fluid motion, Eretria pulls a dagger from her belt and hurls it. The PROJECTILE WHISTLES through the dark. A GASP OF SHOCK follows.

ERETRIA

The next one goes straight through  
your heart -- who are you?

With another dagger gripped, Eretria strides towards AMBERLE. The blade impaled her cloak, missing her neck by a hair, pinning her to a tree.

AMBERLE

I mean no harm! Please! I saw  
your fire and was hoping to warm  
myself.

ERETRIA

You're the second Elf I've run into  
this week. Actually, the first was  
a mongrel. Cute but not very  
bright.

She assesses Amberle, then yanks the dagger free.

ERETRIA

Where are you headed all by  
yourself?

AMBERLE

To the Elvin mission in Cullhaven.  
I'm a teacher.

ERETRIA

You pack light.

Amberle nods to Eretria's sled as they cross to the fire.

AMBERLE

Unlike you.

ERETRIA

My husband found work near Balanor.  
I had to pack up our house and meet  
him there.

Eretria pours wine into a pewter cup, surreptitiously hinges open a ring and deposits the green powder hidden within into the drink. She turns, offers Amberle the cup.

AMBERLE

Thank you.

Amberle raises the cup to her lips, then throws the wine in Eretria's face, using the distraction to draw her sword.

AMBERLE

You have no wedding band and I  
doubt one will ever grace your  
duplicitous finger, Rover!

Eretria defiantly stares down the blade.

ERETRIA

Your jewelry gave you away too,  
Princess. I don't know any teachers  
who have the Royal crest of  
Arborlon engraved on their cuff.

AMBERLE

What was your plan, drug me and  
then rob me?

ERETRIA

I steal to survive. My life wasn't  
handed to me on a silver platter.

AMBERLE

Don't pretend you know the first  
thing about me.

ERETRIA

You don't have an escort. My guess,  
you're running away -- probably  
from a guy who either broke your  
heart or knocked you up. Whatever  
your drama, it doesn't compare to  
what you're going to face out here  
in the real world.

AMBERLE

Thanks for that nugget of Rover  
wisdom.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
Come back to me, Amberle.

Startled, Amberle scans the night.

ERETRIA  
Afraid of the dark, Princess?

Amberle ignores her, grabs a loaf of bread.

ERETRIA  
Now who's the thief?

Amberle pulls off her silver cuff, flings it at Eretria.

AMBERLE  
Believe me, you got the better end  
of that trade.

She unties Eretria's horse and climbs on.

ERETRIA  
If I see you again, I promise I  
won't miss.

AMBERLE  
I look forward to the rematch.

OFF Eretria, pissed, as Amberle gallops off...